

horticap

Growing Together



SCAN ME

Supporting and educating
at Bluecoat Wood Nurseries

www.horticap.org

Issue 1 2025



A new year at Horticap!

Welcome to our first newsletter of 2025, and what a relief it is to finally see some colour in the gardens again (and Victoria's lovely smile too) after a very dull winter. The weather has certainly curtailed some of our plans here at Horticap, but we keep going with smiles on our faces, and an ever positive attitude!

Our fundraising from last year's 40th birthday celebrations is enabling us to improve many of the facilities and equipment onsite, which of course we will keep everyone informed about.

Our students have already been kept busy so far this year with the annual spring clean in anticipation of a full year of growing plants, maintaining the site, contract work, developing

customer service skills in both Hopkins and our shop and not forgetting enjoying art and music. What a fantastic year they have in store!

We are awaiting the deliveries of our spring/summer bedding plug plants, although the greenhouse crews have already busied themselves with sowing Sweet Peas, Geraniums and potting up some summer flower bulbs, amongst many others, which will be appearing in the sales greenhouse when they are ready. Our kitchen garden has benefitted from some work to prepare it for the fruit and veg which will be appearing in some of the dishes in Hopkins, and our students have ensured that the birds have been well looked after through the winter. Of course, we must never forget that behind all this activity, there is a very small army of people behind the scenes, in the office, who keep Horticap running on smooth rails!

We are looking forward to a great 2025, and to offering a Horticap welcome to everyone who visits.

The Horticap Team



Our Students Christmas Party 2024

Our annual student Christmas parties are legendary, giving the opportunity to all students, staff, volunteers and trustees to join in the fun. And what fun we had! We were visited by the fire brigade and police, entertained with a quiz, ate a fabulous Christmas dinner, and of course...Father Christmas came, laden with presents for all. Here are just a few memories.



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Celebrating Lives Well Lived

We received sad news in the build up to Christmas, that two long standing and well respected students had died. Combined, Fraser and Keith had attended Horticap for a magnificent 61 years, and really were part of its fabric.

Their huge personalities shone through on their regular days here and they are sorely missed. They were always keen to participate in all tasks asked of them and in later years, although a little slower, they were able follow their preferred activities.

They also had their own unique way of arriving at work, and no-one was left in any doubt that they had! For Keith, it would be standing by the door, arms open wide and a loud proclamation. For Fraser, he announced his own arrival with an unmistakable "I'm here"!

Fraser was our brilliant wages clerk, ensuring that wages were ready for all students at the end of their working day. He was never happier than when an Abba song came on the radio, when he and Erica would share a dance.

Keith is fondly remembered for being the "best award winning weeder" that Horticap has ever seen! He quietly worked away, and was never happy unless he had left his area totally tidy. The quiet could be disturbed though, when he would stand up tall, chest out and sing out loud the most wonderful songs to us.

Keith was extremely proud to be a Liverpool FC supporter, and seeing Wagon Wheels will always remind us of the lovely Keith.

Fraser's passion for twisting red berries for the Christmas wreaths led him to take them home to do, and he had legendary status for eating Pringles. Fraser often terrorised us with his Jaws impression, it could be very convincing!



Horticultural Capabilities at Horticap

Horticap is a charity that provides students, who have learning and other disabilities, with a supportive and friendly working environment so that they may also develop their social and communication abilities. The work done by our students both on and off site, is varied. It largely follows the seasons, but there are many facilities here that accommodate interesting and fulfilling activities all year round.

All students participate in guided activities in all areas of horticulture, woodcraft, arts, crafts and music, as well as developing customer service skills in the shop and Hopkins. The jewel in the Horticap crown, however, is our beautiful garden, which the students have built, and maintain and nurture, not only for their own pleasure, but for members of the public of ALL ages to enjoy. It includes a wildlife and bird spotting area, as well as beautiful flowers, plants, trees and shrubs. Indeed, it has often been described as a little oasis in the middle of a busy and congested world, and to say that the students are proud of their accomplishments is a huge understatement. Their horticultural capabilities can be seen all around with plants that they have grown, fences they have built and artwork that they have enjoyed creating.



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Student Focus - Matthew

Matthew joined us last year, quickly settling in to the Horticap routine. In fact, Matthew had previously been a student here, and we are delighted he has decided to return to continue his working experience.

He can often be found in the greenhouse, potting on plug plants as well as contributing greatly to making the Christmas wreaths. Indeed, there is nothing that Matthew will not have a go at!

Matthew leads a busy life as he also works at the Bluebird Bakery at Acomb. Sadly though, however much we hint, he never brings us any treats!

He also spends time at Living Potential in Sicklinghall where he enjoys working with their animals, particularly the Alpacas. Along with attending youth club and meeting friends at the pub, Matthew likes to walk his dog Otto on a weekend. What a busy week!



Recently, Matthew expressed an interest in working in Hopkins, and as expected, he has excelled in both his ability and enthusiasm. He is now a fully-fledged member of the Hopkins café team, and although the nursery team were sad to lose him on those days, they are thrilled that he is thriving and is having a well-rounded working experience at Horticap!

Keep going Matthew!



Looking out for the birds

Our students love seeing the variety of birds that come to Horticap, and enjoy selling the bird food, feeders and nesting boxes from the shop. Their work experience and life skills can be seen, both in their enthusiasm to serve customers confidently, and by accurately weighing out the bird food, and pricing it correctly!

And we do practice what we preach! Through the cold, wet days when there really isn't much that can be done outside, our students can be found keeping warm in the mess room, making bird feeders! By filling coconut shells with seed and nuts mixed with fat, they are providing birds with high protein, energy feed that will help to protect the birds through the winter, and ensure they are in peak condition for nesting time. The students had an enormous amount of fun birdwatching from our bird hide!



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Supporting and championing creativity at Horticap

For many years, Carol our shop supervisor has invited local artists to sell and exhibit their work at Horticap. As an artist herself, she is a big advocate for the creative mind and the positive effect the art community generates. Many of you will remember the small meeting room adjacent to the old shop which was utilised as an exhibition, meeting, and classroom space. On occasion, it even doubled up as an overflow for our busy little Tea Room!



Carol says “Creativity is at the heart of Horticap’s process. From the nursery to our more definitive arts and crafts, everything the students and staff do is done in a creative, imaginative and resourceful way. Inviting artists to show and sell their work enables both the artist, and Horticap, the opportunity to benefit not only in monetary terms, but also through social interaction and conversation.”

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Of course, the addition of our own West Wing creative hub has provided our students with a purposeful art space, and since our expansion during 2020, we now have lots of wall space upstairs in Hopkins café. It is the perfect area for exhibitions, which are arranged on a 3 month rolling basis.



Through exhibiting and selling work, each artist supports Horticap by paying a commission to the charity through the sale of their work. Artists’ work is available for sale on a continuous basis in the shop, with artist cards being our biggest seller, offering smaller and more affordable versions of artist work.

We have a very talented bunch supporting us through different mediums ranging from photography, painting, collage and prints. Thank you to all the artists, current and past, who have continued to support Horticap through the sale of their work.

Do keep an eye out on social media so you don’t miss out on any of our artist exhibitions. You never know, there may just be something that would look just right in your own home, or fits the bill for that perfect present!



New for 2025: Horticap Christmas Cards

One of our great supporters, artist David Griffiths, who has helped design our show gardens and areas on the site for many years, is helping us to produce some personalised Horticap Christmas Cards. The design of the cards will be taken from David’s observational drawings and will be on sale from October 2025. They will be wonderful!



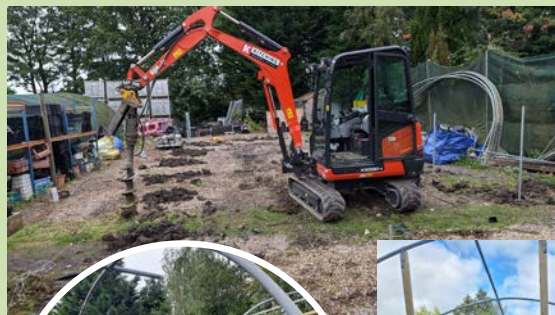


August 2024

Work starts on clearing the work area and dismantling the old tunnels. We retain and reuse as much of the old structures as possible.

The whole area is cleared of the old tunnels and weeds, with trees dug out and readied for the start of construction.

We start installing the foundation tubes, an exciting job as this is done using a big auger on the digger to make the holes. The foundation tubes are then set in concrete. Timber rails are starting to be added, to attach the plastic covering to.



“We aim to help Students extend their knowledge and skills, through structured training using professionally qualified Staff and Volunteers” “The Polytunnel Project”

We are redeveloping three old, disused small polytunnels to provide much needed plant growing space for students to work on perennial and shrub plants.

This project has been generously funded by The Banks Trust and Horticap's supporter Ellie!

Ian, our General Manager, details the work involved.



September 2024

The metal hoops and framework start to be erected reusing most of the hoops from the dismantled tunnels, with new fittings.

With the framework taking shape, hard core is spread and compacted to make ready for the membrane covering.

Work begins on fitting the netting covers to the tunnel sides. With a calm and warm day, the polythene cover is fitted. The Mypex flooring sheet is fixed and a start made on moving in the benches.



November 2024

Work starts on some clearance work on the adjacent space to improve drainage and allow for an additional hard standing/parking area. Sadly, bad weather halts all work in the area for this year.



October 2024

Work starts on the second tunnel with the installation of foundation tubes, and further benches are constructed to allow plants to be accommodated in to the new tunnel.

Hard core is laid and the framework completed for the second tunnel and a start made on fixing the timber framework. Plants are being moved in to the new tunnel.

The first tunnel is now completed and full of plants. The second tunnel is well underway with the timber framework nearing completion.

With the timber framework completed on the second tunnel, a start is made on fixing the netting to the sides.

The cold, wet and windy weather prevents much progress and we call a halt to work on the tunnels until spring.



Sustainability at Horticap through water collection

Have you seen our information boards around our Nature Trail? They have some interesting facts showing how Horticap is working in sustainable ways, with one board showing how we collect and use rainwater and it's an ever evolving story!

Our first rainwater tank and irrigation system was installed in 1989, with a greenhouse

incorporating a rainwater harvesting tank and system being added in 2002/2003. Unsurprisingly, by 2005, our initial tank needed replacing, so a larger tank and pump system were installed. The pump system enabled the more efficient and easier watering of the plants. The same year, our then Education Building was built, with toilets utilising the recycled rainwater for flushing. This building, with all its facilities, replaced the two original Portakabins.

2008 saw a third large water tank being introduced, with the recycled water system being extended to the service the students mess room toilets. Moving on to 2016, and our students helped to lay the concrete base for our splendidly large greenhouse and plant sales area, with our own Alan Titchmarsh officially opening it! Again, a rain water harvesting system was part of the development.

Coming right up to date, and 2025 sees Horticap benefitting from having four large rainwater tanks, which collectively hold 30,000 gallons, or 112,000 litres of rainwater which is used for flushing our toilets, cleaning our vehicles and of course, watering our plants! This saves the use of well over 1,120,000 litres of treated drinking water each year. That's the same as the annual water used by 5 average households, enough for 22,400 showers. Amazing!



Joy Allan, a very good and long standing friend of Horticap, shares her memories of her association with the charity, its development and of course, its students!

"Horticap looked after the garden at the Green Park when we had the hotel from the early eighties; we were one of the first corporate clients. Timothy regularly cut the grass for us and Andy brought a whole team down from time to time to do a tidy up. When Dalesman, the police horse came to the kitchen door for his apple, it was down tools and the students went to chat to him, so no more gardening until he'd left!



After the Green Park was sold, Anne Moore asked me if I would be interested in joining the board. I confessed I knew absolutely nothing about horticulture or adults with learning disabilities, but she seemed to think that didn't matter and that my business experience could be useful, so I joined up. Pauline was operating out of one Portakabin at the time, and board meetings were held in another. We were either freezing cold or absolutely roasting.

When the 21st anniversary was coming up, I suggested we should have one event each month to celebrate and raise the charity's profile. Everyone thought it was a good idea and told me to get on with it, so I did. I can't remember all the events, though there was some dancing, a pancake race, a concert, a garden party and a lunch for 300 at the Cairn Hotel, attended by you know who. It was all great fun and thoroughly exhausting, but we raised a goodly amount of money, and Horticap was in the local paper at least once a month for the whole year. (The local paper had more clout in those days, before social media.

Amongst other things during the twelve years I was involved, I remember some battles with social services, warding off developers who tried to persuade us we'd make mega bucks selling the site to them, wrapping Christmas trees, practising my curtsy for the Duke of Gloucester, worrying about whether we should go ahead with a cafe/tea room, the awards days when it was my privilege to present the prizes, some terrific Christmas parties and doing a bit of brick laying! Also, Roger looking so smart in his suit and bow tie on special occasions, and burying a time capsule at the then new building. I also remember discussing the merits of various players in the England cricket team with Alistair, the merits of various cars with Jamie, and the name of Vicky's latest pet. Some of the nicest memories are of being loudly hailed in the middle of town, and seeing one or more of the students waving cheerily at me.

Above all, I remember the unique atmosphere at Horticap; yes, the hard work but also the fun, the warmth and friendship. As I say, it was the most rewarding time of my life!"

In their own words!

While at Horticap, our students participate in any number of activities and become accomplished workers, and we are always very proud to shout about their accomplishments. It is with equal pride that two of our students, Hannah and Stuart, have agreed to keep a diary for 2025. They are writing about their days at Horticap (and anything else they want to!) and how they are developing their skills throughout the year. It's up to them what is written, and in preparation for each newsletter, they will pick their personal highlights that will go into their contributions. They are being very professional with their approach, and hope that you all enjoy reading their pieces.



Stuart...

All of Christmas with my family was great, and the food was good too!

I've been at Horticap for over 20 years and when I come back after Christmas, there's always loads to do. So far this year I have collected Christmas trees in the tipper, but I also have to make sure the mowers are kept clean.

I've also been helping to put hard core down to level the paths round the greenhouse ready for the benches and plants. Other things I have been doing are taking things and collecting things from the Cone Exchange (including the mushroom crates), having fires, recycling stuff like the scrap metal, and lots of other things!

I can't wait to get back out on the contracts again. My favourite job is mowing grass and our new electric mower is quiet! I trained David up to use the electric mower, as I know what I'm doing. I will help to train more people this year!

Hannah...

I did have a lovely Christmas in Tenby with my family but I was looking forward to coming back to Horticap too as I miss it and my friends. I got lots of musical instruments for Christmas which I brought back to Harrogate with me.

I love music and playing and learning songs, and listening too as it is an important part of my life. It has been great to get music sessions with Beth, but am disappointed that my music project at home has not been happening.

Since I came back to Horticap, I have been mainly in Erica's group potting on in the greenhouse. But it is good to be doing lots of art as well, and I am thrilled that several of my paintings have been framed to sell in the shop. Two have sold already!

Since coming back from Tenby, I have been swimming weekly and now can swim 30 lengths. I am really pleased as I could only do twenty when I started.

I have also joined a drama class with Purple Patch Arts (acting out being a tree growing from seed made me laugh) and I want to continue with classes.

I think the plant work will be really busy soon with the bedding plants. It'll be 'all hands on deck'! However much I love being at Horticap, I can't wait to see my family at Easter as seeing everyone face to face, rather by phone, is really nice!

I am really enjoying writing my diary and saving my many memories. It also helps me when I get stressed to write about how I feel.



Student Focus - Edward

Edward has been with us for eighteen months now, spending three days a week at Horticap. It was obvious very early on that animals and nature have a special place in Edward's heart. As well as keeping a check on the frogs in the pond, watching the fish in the mess room and feeding the birds in the garden, he often shares stories of his pets at home, which we love hearing about. Edward always shares news from Living Potential, where he goes several days a week, and enjoys looking after the many animals there.



His other passion, is music and he would win any round of Mastermind with his encyclopedic knowledge!

Edward enjoys his days in the West Wing where he has proved to be an accomplished artist. He has a precise, and colourful style which has brightened up the walls, giving inspiration to other students.



Naturally, as with all students at Horticap, Edward participates in all activities both on, and off site. He particularly enjoyed going out in Emma's group to do some garden maintenance as part of a contract. He learned new skills by using machinery that he had not used before, and was definitely pleased with himself! He is also very careful when he is instructed in potting on bedding plants, matching labels with the plants and completing many other varied tasks.



The Horticap Bunnies and the Nature Trail

The Horticap Bunnies are looking forward to their next adventure in the nature trail.

Over the years, the Horticap Bunnies have celebrated Easter, Maypole Dancing, Halloween, Bonfire night, At Home (a day in a rabbit burrow), Harry and Megan's wedding, The Coronation, Underwater Diving, Effects of Ocean Pollution, Camping, Seaside holidays, Tim Peak's Space Mission and a Buckingham Palace Garden Party. What adventures lie in store for them this year? It is free to visit, so make sure you come and find out!

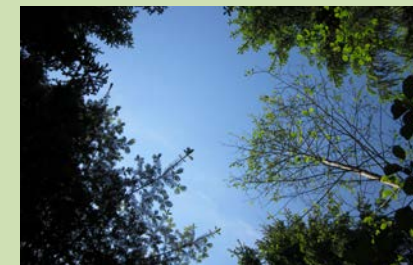


Our Nature Trail really is a special place. It is home to some very interesting and attractive art installations, and houses to our own fairy garden. Our students have also built high rise bug hotels to encourage and provide shelter for a vast range of insects and other animals. At Horticap, no one, or anything is left out!

The tree canopy that covers the nature trail sustains the magical atmosphere, as well as some welcome respite from the heat in the summer months.

We cannot recommend our garden and nature trail enough to our visitors. With paths to follow, benches to relax on, a stage to perform on and a window to the sky to watch the clouds drift by, it really does have something for everyone!

Hobbiton comes to Horticap, with a great job done by our students who have created a small part of the Shire, situated by the Bird Hide on the edge of the Nature Trail. Once the raised beds are planted up, it will look just as lush as the real thing!



Focusing on Snowdrops

Who doesn't appreciate the sight of pretty Snowdrops popping up, bringing hope of new beginnings, and relief that winter will soon be behind us! They certainly cheer up the roadsides and gardens that have been dull over the winter months. But there is more to the seemingly humble Snowdrop than meets the eye.



Galanthus is the Latin name for the Snowdrop, translating as "milk flower". Named after earrings, rather than drops of snow, Snowdrops are not native to the UK and it has been suggested that they were introduced in the late 1500s. There are more than 2,500 varieties.

Despite the bulbs being poisonous, Snowdrops contain a naturally occurring substance called galantamine, which is used to help treat the symptoms of Alzheimers.



At temperatures of 10° C and above, Snowdrop petals open to reveal its nectar, which is the perfect time for bees to feast, as they also emerge from hibernation at around the same temperature.



At Horticap, we sell Snowdrops in pots which will multiply when planted in the garden. The best time to split them is when they have finished flowering, when they can be lifted, separated and replanted "in the green".

As can be seen from these photographs, our students have had a wonderful time using Snowdrops in creative ways. Our art group painted these striking pictures, while the group in the greenhouse tried their hand at making 'kokedama', a Japanese gardening technique which translates as 'moss ball'. Great work everyone!



Gardening Alongside Nature

Spring has sprung (well almost) and here at Horticap, we are keen to be out and about in the garden, starting up the contracts again in the community, and of course working on our spring and summer bedding plants. As an organisation, we are mindful of our commitment to work in a more sustainable way, our impact on the environment and in supporting nature.



If you start to notice bumblebees in your garden around now, they are likely to be Early Bumblebees, a common bee that can appear as early as March.

They are invaluable as an early pollinator, and have a taste for pollen from a wide variety of flowers, from fruit blossom to Rhododendrons and of course, Snowdrops!

They are quite small, around 1.6 to 1.8 cm long, with distinctive lemon-yellow bands on its thorax and abdomen, and an orange tail.

We encourage as much wildlife to Horticap as we can by growing shrubs, brambles and trees that give insects, such as the Early Bumblebee, pollen to feed on.

We hope both our own bees and visiting bees help us to have an abundant fruit yield, providing Hopkins

with some tasty, juicy fruit to make into some delicious bakes, and cheeky blackbirds with a sneaky snack! Our planting around the site offers our own Honey Bees with plenty of pollen, so we are hoping for a good honey harvest too! As always, our thanks go to Dr and Mrs Rowbottom, who carefully look after our bees, and process their honey and all out of the kindness of their hearts!

Our pond was built in 1989, and will soon be at bursting point with frogs, who will be laying their frogspawn. The environment is perfect for them as we have allowed nature to find its own way. Flowers such as Forget-me-nots and Buttercups around the edge encourage insects and provide valuable food sources, as well as slugs, snails and worms that they find in the undergrowth to eat.



We are lucky to have such a large pond, but a simple bowl placed in a shady corner will attract frogs, and which could help with naturally controlling the slug and snail population in the garden!

We do see toads at Horticap too, but the help they need in late winter/early spring is to get to their breeding place safely. Why not check out froglife.org and join a local toad patrol, to help them safely cross roads?



Dates for your diary

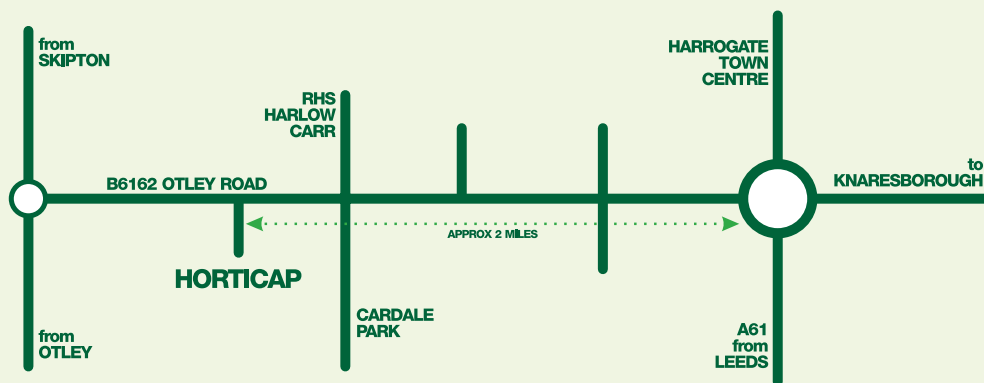
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Do come and find us at:

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24th to 27th April 2025

Great Yorkshire Show
8th to 11th July 2025

Weeton Show
20th July 2025



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